

# GAME FACE

INDIANANOREBOOK MAGAZINE

ELLIS BURKS  
LEADING BY EXAMPLE



July 2001 GameFace \$2.50



Photo: Gregory Drezdson





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Jacobs Field  
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**PUBLICATION ORDERS**

To order a subscription or single issue  
of GAME FACE, please call 216.420.GIFT  
or toll free at 800.38.TRIBE.

**CREDITS**

Our thanks to everyone who assisted the  
Marketing Staff of the Cleveland Indians  
in the development of this publication.

**PUBLICATION DESIGN & LAYOUT**

Zorc Photo & Design  
with contributions from Herip Associates  
and ZZ Design.

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

Cover and Game Action photos by Gregory  
Drezdzon (unless otherwise noted)

**PRINTING**

St Ives  
Cleveland



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**10 NOT SO INVISIBLE MAN BY BILL NEEDLE**

Indians outfielder Marty Cordova would rather blend in than stand out, but by opening the season with such great hitting, he has propelled himself into the limelight. Of course, he loves to hit, but the fanfare? He'll just have to get used to it.

**36 LEADING BY EXAMPLE BY BILL NEEDLE**

When Ellis Burks came to the Indians, many of us knew of his hitting skills. But since his arrival, fans and players alike have learned there's much more to the man. Burks is a team leader, a steadying influence on all, and a great teacher for those new to the game.

**44 THE ULTIMATE INDIANS STARTING LINEUP BY CHUCK MURR**

In recognition of the Indians 100th Anniversary, an expert panel selected the 100 best players in franchise history. With the number narrowed down to 100, could you pick the ultimate starting lineup? Fans have the opportunity to do just that this summer. Chuck Murr talks with local sports and news media personnel and learns it's not such an easy task. (Don't miss the career summaries for the Top 100 beginning on page 58.)

**66 HAPPY REUNION BY STEVE HERRICK**

Things sure have changed in Cleveland since catcher Eddie Taubensee was last here. Taubensee was happy to be traded away from the Tribe after the 1991 season. But with the team's resurgence and a new Ballpark, Taubensee was happy to return.

**HEAVY HITTER...  
ALL-TIME TRIBE  
HOME RUN  
LEADER JIM THOME  
SIGNS FOR THE FANS.**



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• Rob Tittel (Stow, Ohio)

"The FanCast Booth was a great experience that made me really feel like I was a part of the game! It was something that I never thought I would get the opportunity to do. It's a great memory that will last a long time. I would definitely do it again, especially when it benefits a good cause like Cleveland Indians Charities!"

• Brent Reichert (Akron, Ohio)



# Way Back! Gone!!!



# NOT SO



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

# INVISIBLE MAN

**by Bill Needle**

It's difficult to hide when you're hitting .400 well into May. But you can bet Marty Cordova would prefer this story not be written. Cordova's attitude toward publicity is refreshing in these times of "Ya Gotta Have A Gimmick!"

There's dyed hair, shaved hair, disdain for the media, cultivation of the media, becoming a part of the media, superstition, lack of superstition, and countless other ways for a player to separate himself from the pack. Cordova would prefer to blend in. Anonymity is just fine with him.



**"I don't want to bother anyone and I want to get along with everyone. I don't like attention."**

**Outfielder Marty Cordova**

Of course, it's hard to be anonymous when one is a former AL Rookie-of-the-Year, one who shattered the myth of "The Sophomore Slump" by hitting over .300 in his second season in 1996 and .285 as recently as 1999 – all of which is clearly documented on Cordova's resume.

It's also hard to remain in the shadows when one has spent a full year out of sight and out of mind before exploding in Spring Training with a .442 batting average as an invitee – with only a guarantee of Class AAA employment should the spring trial prove unsuccessful. That, too, is part of Cordova's experience. Factor in Cordova's .400-plus batting average in early 2001 with the ignominy of being signed by Boston in January 2000 and his release before the 2000 AL season even started along with the 200 at-bats in just 62 games with the Blue Jays last season, and you can forget invisibility.

Better you should think of a made-for-TV movie, *"Marty Cordova: So NOT The Invisible Man."*

But Cordova, despite the ingredients for a warm-and-fuzzy, riches-to-rags-to-riches saga, would just as soon others get the attention.

"I'd like to be just another guy on the team, have a good year, be quiet, and mind my own business," Cordova said. "I don't want to bother anyone and I want to get along with everyone. I don't like attention."

**"My agent told me the Indians called him more than anybody else. He said Cleveland was really prepared to make a commitment. That's why I signed with the Indians."**

**Outfielder Marty Cordova**



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

"There are certain players on this team who deserve the spotlight. The Indians are about Juan Gonzalez, Robbie Alomar, Bartolo Colon, and Jim Thome. It's a team of superstars. The rest of us need to know our roles and let those superstars do their thing."

Sorry, Marty, but avoiding attention is going to be difficult this season, especially when last season's Toronto totals of four homers and 18 RBI were exceeded by early May.

A native of Las Vegas, Cordova, appropriately, rolled the dice after a dismal 2000 in Toronto when he decided to accept the Indians Spring Training invitation and guarantee of a spot with Buffalo in Class AAA.

Timing is everything in baseball – and not just the timing it takes to get around

on a Pedro Martinez fastball. Sometimes timing has plenty to do with just finding a spot on a roster. Just about every Indians fan knows the state of the Tribe's outfield at the end of last season. Manny Ramirez was a free agent. David Justice and Richie Sexson were already gone through trades for much-needed pitching. There were openings in the garden at Jacobs Field. Outfield candidates were needed for the upcoming 2001 campaign – especially if Ramirez went elsewhere.

Ellis Burks was one, signing in November. Gonzalez would be another, signing in January. Between those marquee acquisitions stood Cordova, who signed a Minor League contract in December, getting an invitation to Major League training camp as his only perk in the deal.



"I could have gone to a team that wasn't as good as Cleveland," he says. "And I sure didn't know Juan Gonzalez was going to sign a month after I did. But I wanted to be part of something fun. Winning is fun."

"My agent told me the Indians called him more than anybody else. He said Cleveland was really prepared to make a commitment. That's why I signed with the Indians."

When camp opened, Cordova presented his case to Charlie Manuel. "He told me, 'If you just give me a chance, I think I can help you. I can make your team.'"

"I kept playing him in Spring Training and he just kept right on hitting." It would be pure speculation to think Manuel gave Cordova a chance because there are those who think Manuel himself was always looking for a chance in his own career. But the speculation has its merits.

More likely, it's that Cordova felt he could play somewhere, if not for the Tribe. Also, the Indians had their eye on Cordova long before their need for outfielders.

"We had been getting good reports on Marty since 1999," said Tribe assistant GM

Mark Shapiro. "This past off-season, we really went after him."

"When we sat down at the end of 2000, we talked about the free agents who might have an 'up' side for us. Our scouts had Marty right at the top of the list."

But even the .422 batting average in Spring Training wouldn't have mattered in Cordova's future with the Tribe if Travis Fryman hadn't suffered an elbow injury that kept him out of action until June.

With Fryman out, Russell Branyan became the Indians third baseman, moving in from left field, where he was scheduled to play were Fryman healthy. That move created a tiny opportunity for Cordova, at least until Fryman returned.

As things turned out, Fryman didn't return to the Indians for two months, until early June. By then, Cordova had blasted his tiny opportunity into an opening he could drive a tank through.

"He just kept hitting," Manuel said. "I play the guys who produce and nobody could complain about what Marty has done for us since he got here."

**"I kept playing him  
in Spring Training  
and he just kept  
right on hitting . . .  
He just kept  
hitting."**

**Indians Manager  
Charlie Manuel  
on  
Marty Cordova**

Cordova is unique to the Indians in their Jacobs Field Era. Since the Tribe became one of baseball's elite in 1994, they have always seemed to replace one marquee player with another. Trade Kenny Lofton, get Marquis Grissom and David Justice. Trade Matt Williams, acquire Travis Fryman. Need a second baseman? Sign Roberto Alomar. Lose Manny Ramirez to free agency? Sign two-time AL MVP Juan Gonzalez. Not so with Cordova.

"He's really the first 'lucky' signing the Indians have had since they got good," says Greg Brinda, local sports radio talk-show host. "They've had their 'unlucky' signings, like Jack McDowell. But Cordova seems to be the first guy who's paid dividends far greater than the cost of signing him."

There are a number of theories as to why Cordova went from a .309 average and 111 RBI in 1996 to relative invisibility with Toronto last season. One is physical.

Not a classic power hitter, Cordova's career-best total of 24 home runs came in his rookie season. He had 16 in his second year, but just 43 in the four years after. He was regarded as a solid, big-league hitter. But he wasn't regarded as a home run hitter. At the same time, however, in the late '90s, as it became apparent that the big money was in the long ball, Cordova gradually built himself up to 220 pounds – the better to hit homers.

"I lifted weights all the time," he said. "I trained like a bodybuilder, not a baseball player." Experts think the added bulk cost Cordova quickness at the plate. Near the end of 2000, he quit the weight work and in the off-season turned to flexibility exercises – and lost 20 pounds. He also had laser surgery to improve his vision.



Photo: Gregory Drezdson



A second theory concerning Cordova's misadventures in 2000 centers on his emotional aspects. Boston signed him to a two-year Minor League contract that January, promising him he'd be on the Major League roster before the start of the season. Instead, he was released by the Red Sox the week before the 2000 season began. There aren't many jobs for free agents the week before the season starts, although Cordova was able to hook on with the Blue Jays.

"Marty signed as the last man on the Toronto team," said his agent, Seth Levinson. "I think it was a blow to his ego. It was the first time he was ever told he wasn't good enough. I think it affected him the entire 2000 season."

If there was any concern that Cordova's disappointment from 2000 carried over to this year, it was dispelled for good on an Indians road trip through Kansas City and Tampa Bay during the first week of May. As the Tribe swept six straight from the Royals and Devil Rays, Cordova torched opposing pitching, going 11-for-26 with 13 RBI. Included in the rampage were three-run homers in two of the three KC games and a bases-loaded double against Tampa Bay in the final game of the trip.

"It helps when you're on a team with such great hitters as we have here," Cordova said. "When it gets down to me at the seven or eight hole in the order, or wherever I'm hitting, maybe I'm an afterthought to some pitchers, and that's fine with me."

Hitting close to .380 at the start of June, it's not likely Cordova is regarded as an



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

**"I take my hat off to Marty. His season thus far is an old-fashioned American success story. He came to our training camp, didn't say two words to anybody, and just hit and hit and hit."**

**Indians Executive Vice President and General Manager John Hart**

afterthought by AL pitchers no matter who surrounds him in the Indians lineup. He's certainly not viewed that way by the Tribe.

"I take my hat off to Marty," said GM John Hart. "His season thus far is an old-fashioned American success story. He came to our training camp, didn't say two words to anybody, and just hit and hit and hit."

"He hasn't stopped, either. He's stayed out of the limelight, worked hard, and made it very difficult to get him out of the lineup."

It might be easy to get caught up in over-analyzing Cordova's fall from prominence with the Twins, his disappointment with the Red Sox, frustration in Toronto, and his resurrection in 2001 with the Indians.

One could examine the financial woes the Twins faced, problems that allowed Cordova to get away as a free agent.

One might also look at a case of plantar fasciitis Cordova suffered in 1997, an injury

*Thanks to his hot bat, Cordova has been a familiar sight on the base paths (taking direction from third base coach Joel Skinner).*

exacerbated by the artificial turf at the Metrodome that hampered him in 1998.

A third consideration is his return to taking lots and lots of batting practice, something Cordova got away from over the last several years.

"I used to hit a lot. Now, I hit extra every day, whether I'm starting or not. I like to hit a lot. It helps me."

Cordova isn't buying into any of those reasons for why things might have happened the way they did. He's firmly rooted in the present.

"I don't think about what happened last year or the year before or five or ten years ago," he said. "None of that stuff really matters to me because it's not going to change what happens today."

"I'm responsible for what has happened to me. I don't blame Minnesota for any-



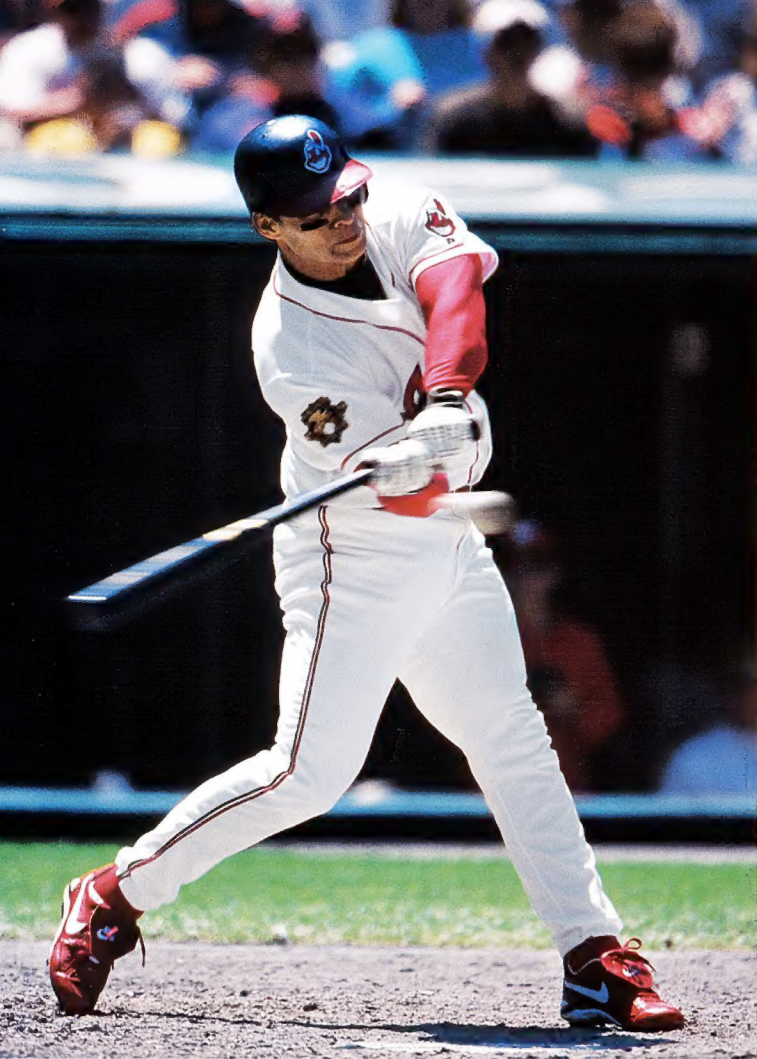


Photo: Gregory Drezdson

**"As for the injuries, they're long gone. I've been healthy for years. What I did in the past is past . . . Now, I just want to play. I just want to be a part of a winner."**

**Outfielder Marty Cordova**

thing. They gave long-term deals to other players, so if they wanted to give a long-term deal to me, they would have. I just didn't give them reason to.

"As for the injuries, they're long gone. I've been healthy for years. What I did in the past is past. I don't talk about the past. All I'm interested in is right now. Now, I just want to play. I just want to be a part of a winner."

So goes Marty Cordova's quest to remain unseen, invisible with a .380 batting average, invisible and unnoticed after going from 1995 AL Rookie-of-the-Year to All-Forgotten in 2000 to a possible Comeback Player Award in 2001.

"Really, I'm just trying to stay unnoticed, stay unrecognized."

With what has happened thus far in 2001, it seems like Cordova would be better off with a goal of winning a batting title than a goal of staying invisible.

Good luck in your attempt to just blend in, Mr. Cordova. You're going to need it.

## FRIDAY LUNCH PARTIES ARE BACK!

Summertime means **Friday Lunch Parties** at the **Terrace Club** at Jacobs Field.

Take a welcomed timeout from your work day and head over to the Terrace Club any summer Friday (through August 31) for a super lunch and spectacular views of Jacobs Field.

The Friday Lunch Parties run from 11:30AM until 2:00PM and are sponsored by **Ruggles Ice Cream**.

Local radio personalities and stations will add to the fun with giveaways, contests, and more!

It's the best thing to happen to lunchtime!





## CLEVELAND INDIANS CHARITIES

### MULTITUDE OF YOUTH PROGRAMS SUPPORTED BY THE FUND-RAISING EFFORTS OF CLEVELAND INDIANS CHARITIES

Cleveland Indians Charities (CIC), the charitable arm of the Cleveland Indians, was established in 1989 to make a positive contribution to the quality of life for Northeast Ohio youth by providing educational and recreational opportunities.

It is the intent of CIC that the contributions made to these organizations will energize thousands of kids to face today's challenges with courage and responsibility.

Since 1989, CIC has donated nearly \$3.5 million to local organizations that serve the youth of Northeast Ohio. CIC has established relationships with several local organizations that focus on youth education and youth recreation. The following organizations benefit from a continued partnership with CIC:

- Cleveland Municipal School District
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland
- United Black Fund Larry Doby Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) Program
- City of Cleveland Division of Recreation Rookie League Program
- Cleveland Baseball Federation
- North American Indian Cultural Center
- Cleveland State University
- Winter Haven, Florida Boys & Girls Club

The relationships that CIC maintains with these Northeast Ohio youth-service agencies provide the opportunity to jointly create, design, and execute programs and activities. The result is programming which helps young people develop necessary life skills, learn responsibility and cooperation, and develop courage and confidence to face today's hurdles.

The monies donated by CIC have been raised through a variety of activities and special events (see pages 28, 30) throughout the season. In addition, a major portion of the total was raised through the generosity of Cleveland Indians corporate partners.

In 2000, for the sixth straight year, CIC donated \$100,000 to the Cleveland Municipal School District's Athletic Department. The \$100,000 donation will help defray the cost of its high school baseball and softball programs. CIC also made significant donations to the following organizations in 2000: Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland (\$100,000); United Black Fund (\$60,000) for the operation of the Larry Doby RBI Program; City of Cleveland Division of Recreation (\$45,000) for the operation of the Rookie League Youth Baseball Program and a girls softball program; and Cleveland Baseball Federation (\$25,000).

The Cleveland Indians organization and its players have a unique opportunity to make a positive impact on the youth of Northeast Ohio. It is an opportunity and responsibility we embrace.

If you would like information on any of the programs offered through Cleveland Indians Charities, please call 216.420.4400.

*continued on page 28, see Fund-Raising Efforts . . .*

*First baseman Jim Thome (far left), pitcher Dave Burba (fourth from right, back row), and manager Charlie Manuel (second from right, back row) participated in the festivities when CIC presented the Cleveland Municipal Schools with \$100,000 to support their baseball and softball programs.*



Gregory Drezdon



## CLEVELAND INDIANS CHARITIES

### FUND-RAISING EFFORTS SUPPORT YOUTH PROGRAMS

## 2001 CIC EVENTS

*continued from page 26*

★ **Online Auction** – You can own a piece of Indians history! Visit [www.indians.com](http://www.indians.com) now through December to bid on a variety of Indians memorabilia, including autographed baseballs, jerseys, bats, and other unique items. Items change every Monday at 3PM EST.



**FanCast Booth** – Get a different view of the game from a Jacobs Field broadcast booth – as you call all the action on the field. You'll take home a souvenir video recording of your unique experience. Cost for one fan to broadcast an inning is \$30, or bring a friend and broadcast as a pair for \$40. Call 216.420.4382 to book your game and innings in advance, or sign up at Guest Services in section 120.

★ **Jacobs Field Tours** – Experience the excitement of Cleveland's crown jewel with a behind-the-scenes tour of one of baseball's greatest ballparks. Tours are available May through September, Monday through Saturday, plus Sundays in June, July, and August when the

team is on the road. Tickets are \$6.50 for adults and \$4.50 for youths 14 and under and senior citizens. A group rate and time are also available. Tickets are available at the Jacobs Field Box Office, all nine Indians Team Shops, through [www.indians.com](http://www.indians.com), and at all Ticketmaster Ticket Centers. The tour includes a visit to: the Bullpen, Club Lounge, Press Box, Dugout, Party Suite, and Batting Cages (subject to change). Call 216.420.4385 for more information.

★ **Major League Baseball Players' Alumni Association Swing with the Legends Golf Outing** – Corporate registration includes a Jacobs "Field of Dreams" clinic (Sunday, June 17), sponsors brunch and golf outing (Monday, June 18), and the Swing with the Legends Golf Outing at Tanglewood Country Club (Tuesday, June 19). Call 216.377.2010 for further details.

*continued on page 30, see Fund-Raising Efforts . . .*

*A number of "musical" Tribe stars (like Omar Vizquel) have performed annually at Tribe Jam – delighting audiences filled with baseball and music fans (see page 30).*



Photo: Gregory Drezdron



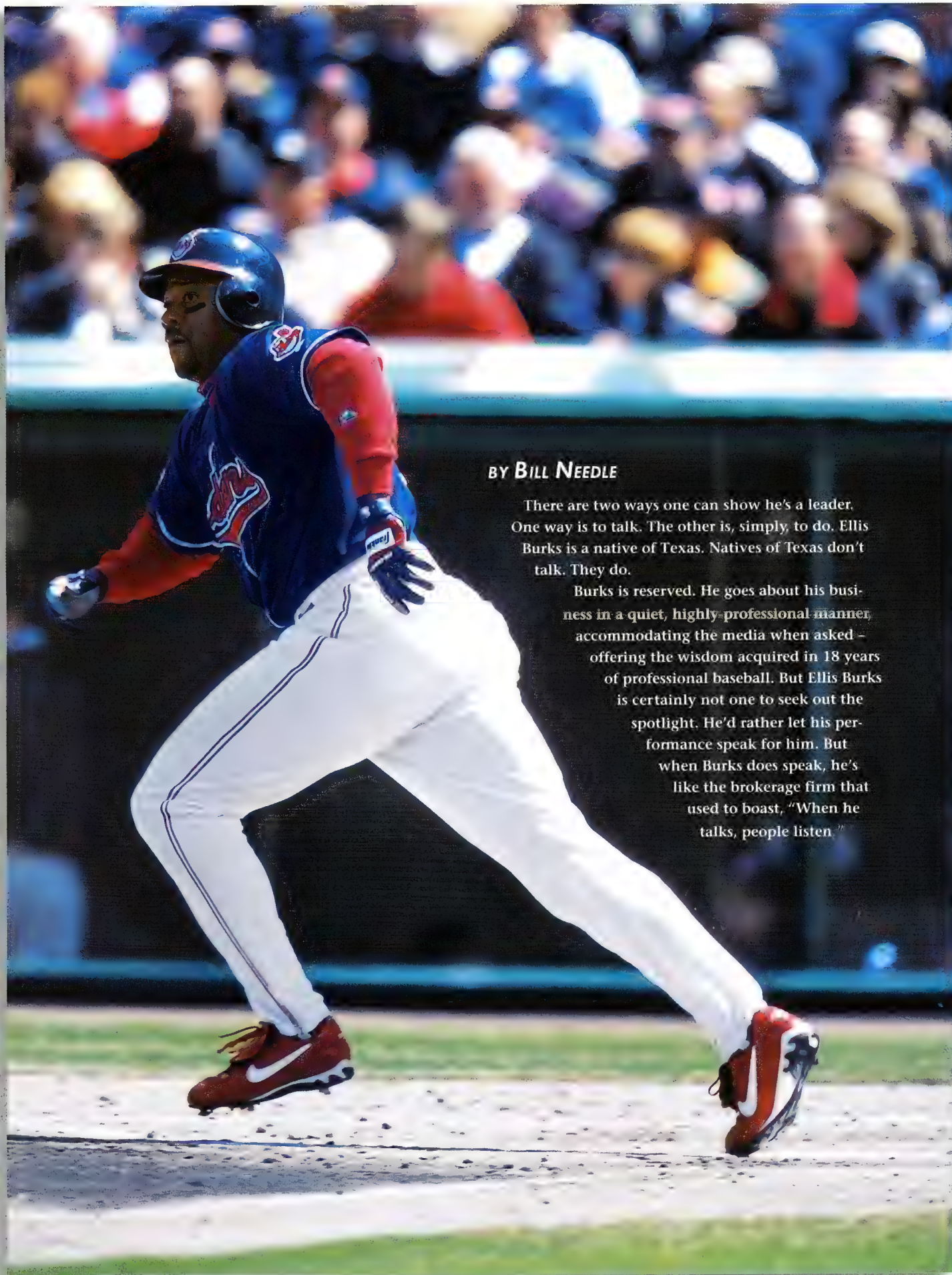
A full-page photograph of a Cleveland Indians baseball player in a batting stance. The player is wearing a blue jersey with red accents, white pants, and a blue helmet. He is holding a bat and looking towards the pitcher. The background is a blurred stadium crowd.

# LEADING

## By EXAMPLE

Photo: Gregory Drezdson





**BY BILL NEEDLE**

There are two ways one can show he's a leader. One way is to talk. The other is, simply, to do. Ellis Burks is a native of Texas. Natives of Texas don't talk. They do.

Burks is reserved. He goes about his business in a quiet, highly professional manner, accommodating the media when asked – offering the wisdom acquired in 18 years of professional baseball. But Ellis Burks is certainly not one to seek out the spotlight. He'd rather let his performance speak for him. But when Burks does speak, he's like the brokerage firm that used to boast, "When he talks, people listen."

Photo: Gregory Drezdson





Photo: Gregory Drezdson

*While Burks has sustained (and continues to endure the effects of) many injuries over the years, opposing teams cannot discount his ability on the field.*

Much has been said about Burks breaking in with the Red Sox in 1987 and the effect the veteran Boston players had on Burks' approach to his career, a veteran role he is now playing with young Indians players like C.C. Sabathia.

"Jim Rice, Lee Smith, and Dwight Evans played a major part in molding me into the player I am today," Burks says. "Those guys emphasized hard work, listening to the coaches, and playing hard on the field; letting your bat do the talking for you – don't go doing all that 'smack'-talking, just playing the game the way it's supposed to be played."

Many Major League rookies get the same treatment Burks did from those veteran Red Sox leaders, but fewer take the advice to heart. Burks has decided to keep the tradition going by passing on what he's learned the way it was passed along to him.

"That attitude of trying to help the young players worked best for me. It's why

I am the way I am. Any time I'm on a team with a young player, I tend to talk with him and see how his attitude is. If his attitude suits the team, OK. But if it doesn't seem to be what's best for the whole team, I'll try to talk with him. I might say, 'Try it this way, do something a little bit different, maybe take a look at things another way, maybe respect people more and treat them the way you want to be treated.' "

Burks is highly regarded by teammates and fans in every city in which he's played, and he's been a well-traveled performer during his 15-year career.

After an all-state high school career in Texas as a pitcher and shortstop, Burks was drafted by the Red Sox in the first round of the now-defunct January draft in 1983, after his first semester at Ranger (TX) Junior College. But rather than accept the Red Sox offer, one that included a then-healthy \$15,000 signing bonus, Burks decided to remain in school. By the time of the June

1983 draft, Burks – already a number one choice – would have been back in the draft pool had the Red Sox not increased their offer to more than three times what they had offered just six months before. This time, Burks said "yes" to Boston.

He began the 1987 season at Pawtucket, Boston's Class AAA affiliate. But by late April, Burks was in the Major Leagues to stay, making several post-season All-Rookie teams after becoming the first Boston rookie (and third Red Sox player ever) to register 20 homers and 20 steals in the same season.

After six years in Boston, Burks changed his Sox upon being granted free agency in 1992, signing with Chicago for the 1993 campaign. On Chicago's South Side, he was an integral part of the Sox's AL West title squad, hitting 17 homers with 74 RBI and adding a .304 batting average in the ALCS against Toronto.

A free agent again after his year in Chicago, Burks signed with the Rockies that



November and exploded on the Mile High City the following spring. He homered in his first at-bat and was hitting .354 with a .738 slugging percentage in mid-May when a wrist injury forced him to the DL until the end of July in a season that was cancelled after the work stoppage in August. Burks spent five seasons in Colorado, becoming one of the Rockies most popular players before a trade to the Giants in 1998.

In Burks' earlier days, he was the "young phenom," hitting .272, .294, .303, and .296 in his first four Major League seasons for a .287 average between 1987 and 1990. These days, almost 1200 hits and 10 years later, Burks is the respected veteran, co-judge (with Steve Reed) of the Tribe's "Kangaroo Court," and a man given credit for a mature,

business-like atmosphere in the Indians clubhouse.

"It was great being the 'young phenom,' I loved it," Burks says. "But a lot of times, there are a lot of expectations that come with being that young phenom. You can hit 20 homers and then the expectation is that you should hit 30. It's always something else.

"But I loved playing in Boston as a young player. It's a great city and I learned a lot.

"But today, being a veteran now, I've had a lot of experiences and I have a lot to offer the young players – and I tend to do that – and I like doing that."

Since following the advice of his Red Sox elders, Burks has achieved a great deal in the

***"I've played for winning teams and I've played for losing teams. But at this stage in my career, I'm trying to win a World Series – or at least get there. That's one of the reasons I signed with Cleveland. I wanted to play for a team with a chance to do that."***

***Indians Outfielder Ellis Burks***

14 big league seasons preceding his signing with Cleveland last November.

He won a Gold Glove in 1990 and Silver Slugger Awards in 1990 and 1996, the same two seasons in which he was selected to All-Star teams.

1996 might have been Burks' best campaign. In addition to the Silver Slugger and All-Star honors, Burks became only the second player in history – Henry Aaron was the first – to hit 40 homers, steal 30 bases, and register 200 hits in the same season.

He has succeeded at every level of the game – to a point. His high school team lost in the championship game. So did his junior college club. In Class A, as a Boston Minor Leaguer, his team lost in a best-of-five series for the title. The next season, in Double A, his team lost again in a best-of-five series. With Boston in 1988 and 1990, his Red Sox lost to Oakland in the ALCS. In 1993, his only year with the White Sox, Chicago lost the ALCS to Toronto. With the Rockies in 1995, Burks' Colorado team lost to Atlanta, and last year his Giants were eliminated by the Mets. The near-misses have had an effect on the 36-year-old Burks.

"Coming close makes me even more hungry," Burks says, leaning back against the wall in the Indians dugout at Jacobs Field. "I've come close many times. In Boston in '88, last year with San Francisco, all the way back to high school.

"Winning up to a certain point gives you a taste for winning and then, all of a sudden, it's taken away from you. It makes you hungry to keep winning. That's the attitude

*Burks works at his craft with determination and a professional attitude that has caught the attention of teammates and fans.*



Photo: Gregory Drezdson



have two or three different guys. It's that tough to pick."

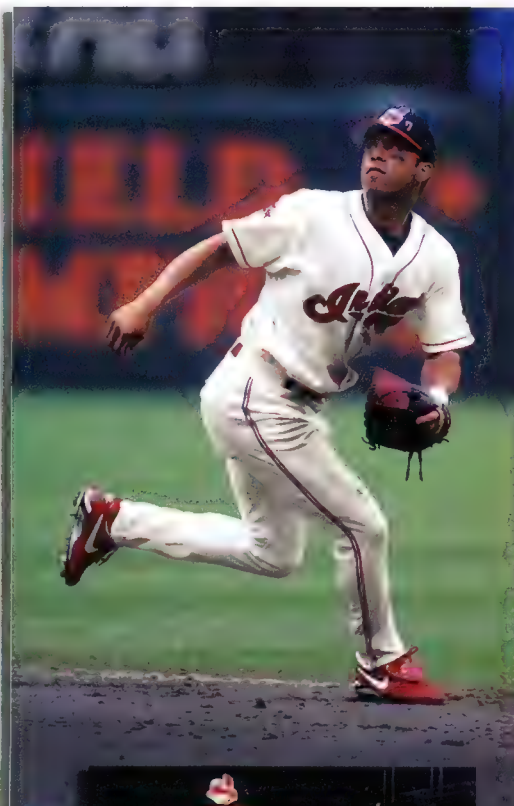
Bibb, hosts *Your Hometown*, a series of short programs about the people and renaissance of Northeast Ohio, so it is natural that the veteran TV journalist and lifelong Indians fan selects Sandy Alomar, Jr. to his team. He goes with a more contemporary lineup, choosing players that all have performed for the Indians during his lifetime. He

also shows an obvious appreciation for defense.

"Sandy Alomar, for everything he did on the field and as one of the crowd favorites, gets my nod at catcher," he said. "He was the key to turning the team around and into what we have seen the last decade."

*continued, see Starting Lineup, page 56*

**Including any modern-day players in your starting lineup?** Clockwise, beginning top left: all-time Tribe home run leader, first baseman Jim Thome; all-around great second baseman Roberto Alomar; hitter extraordinaire, rightfielder Manny Ramirez; fleet-of-foot, high-jumping centerfielder Kenny Lofton; All-Star MVP catcher Sandy Alomar, Jr.; and fielding wonder, shortstop Omar Vizquel.



Sandy Alomar, Jr. photo by Ron Kuntz. Other photos this page by Gregory Drezdson.



# LEADING BY EXAMPLE

*continued from page 42*

Burks' professionalism extends far beyond his on-field demeanor or his interest in helping the development of his younger teammates. There's also a matter of giving things back to the communities in which he's played. With the Giants in 1999, he was the point man for the collection of team memorabilia and monetary donations for victims of the tragedy at Columbine High School, serving a community where he played four-plus seasons before being traded to San Francisco in July, 1998.

With Colorado between 1994 and the trade in 1998, Burks donated a considerable sum to the Rockies field restoration program and had two diamonds dedicated in his name.

Upon signing with the Tribe last autumn, Burks announced he would donate a part of his salary to Cleveland Indians Charities for the entire term of his contract, with an additional amount to be given should the club win the pennant.

"I'm not hurting financially," Burks said. "I have a wonderful family and I've been blessed for a long time. If I can do anything – and not just with money – to help someone, I will."

Some people say and some people do. And so far this 2001 season, it really doesn't matter how much Ellis Burks has said upon arriving in Cleveland. His bat has made so much noise, nobody has heard a single word.

*Burks and his wife Dori have three daughters: Carissa, Elisha, and Breanna, and one son, Christopher (right), who Indians fans and players have come to know and love this season as the Tribe's newest bat boy!*



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

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Dodge Fireworks

Claritin Al Rosen/Travis Fryman Poster

Upper Deck Fireworks

Kohl's Kenny Lofton Bobblehead Doll

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FirstEnergy Fireworks

Please refer to page 22 for the complete Indians 2001 season schedule and promotional event calendar.

You can purchase *single-game tickets* at the Jacobs Field Box Office, Indians Team Shops, Ticketmaster Ticket Centers, online at [ticketmaster.com](http://ticketmaster.com), or by calling toll free at 888.70.TRIBE.

**See you at the Ballpark!**





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*Nearly a decade ago, Eddie Taubensee was pleased to be traded away from Cleveland. The move would offer him the opportunity of more playing time (not to mention escape from the confines of a crumbling Cleveland Stadium). Now, Taubensee finds himself back in a Tribe uniform, but it's a*

# Happy Reunion

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by **Steve Herrick**

Eddie Taubensee's first stint with the Indians lasted only one year, but he has vivid memories of the 1991 season.

"I remember we played a doubleheader against Milwaukee at the old (Cleveland) Stadium," he said. "At the beginning of the first game there were about 800 people in the stands. There might have been 5,000 for the second game. Things have changed a lot. We have a packed ballpark now. The fans are great and this is a great city."

Taubensee was traded to the Houston Astros following the '91 season, which saw the Indians lose a club-record 105 games. The deal worked out well for both sides. The Indians acquired center-fielder Kenny Lofton, who's been one of the top leadoff men in the game the last several seasons. Taubensee, meanwhile, got a chance to prove himself as a Major League catcher with the Astros and, following another trade, the Cincinnati Reds.

Taubensee returned to the Indians for pitchers Jim Brower and Robert Pugh on November 16 of last year. It didn't take long for him to notice how much things have changed. Cavernous Cleveland Stadium with all of its empty seats is gone and has been replaced by state-of-the-art Jacobs Field that has helped the Indians become one of the highest-drawing teams in baseball.

"It's totally different now," said Taubensee. "We've got a tremendous team this year. In 1991, we lost over 100 games. Now we're in a position to win over 100 games."

And Taubensee is thrilled to be back with the Tribe. "I feel real honored that they wanted me back," he said. "I feel very fortunate to be here."

*Taubensee (congratulating Reed, on right) has returned to Cleveland with the experience of a seasoned veteran.*



Photo: Gregory Drezdson



**"They called me to tell me about the trade. You're always afraid you're going to hear a place you don't want to go, but when I heard Cleveland, I had a smile on my face."**

**Tribe catcher Eddie Taubensee**





The chance to be part of a team trying to win a championship is the biggest reason why Taubensee is happy to return to Cleveland.

"This couldn't be better," he said. "I saw a good opportunity here. I didn't know how I would fit in. I still have the attitude that I want to play as much as I can and help this team."

At this point, winning and getting a championship ring are the most important things for Taubensee. "The main thing is I want to win," he said. "I'm not playing for the Hall of Fame, and I'm not playing for the All-Star Game. I'm trying to win."

The Indians were equally happy to get Taubensee back. He gives them a left-handed hitter to back up Einar Diaz behind the plate. The Indians were so glad to re-acquire Taubensee that they signed him to a contract extension earlier this season that carries through 2003 with a club option for 2004.

"I was glad they had that much confidence in me," he said. "We had talked about it a little in Spring Training, but I didn't think anything would happen that quickly."

Taubensee wasn't surprised about the trade that brought him back to Cleveland. He was in the final year of his contract and expected the Reds would deal him before he could become a free agent. And he will be completing his 10th season in the Majors, which meant he could have vetoed a trade.

"I was surprised how early it was (in the off-season)," he said. "When the Reds picked up my option, I knew something would happen during the year. It wasn't a total surprise. I knew they liked (catcher) Jason LaRue. I'm glad it happened in the off-season. It would have been a lot harder to get adjusted to during the season."

The day of the trade was a happy one for the 32-year-old Taubensee, who resides in Windermere, Florida, with his wife, Rene, and three children, Justin (5), Benjamin (3), and Matthew (1).

"They called me to tell me about the trade," he said. "You're always afraid you're going to hear a place you don't want to go, but when I heard Cleveland, I had a smile on my face."

Being a catcher in the big leagues is something Taubensee dreamed about since he started playing baseball. He played his high school ball at Lake Howell High School in Casselberry, Florida. A coach for a rival



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

team was John Hart, now the Indians general manager.

"Baseball was always my favorite sport," said Taubensee. "I started playing when I was 10 years old. I was hoping it would take me either to college or the pros. I was a catcher in high school. I played some outfield and first base, but since I was a kid I liked being a catcher. I thought it was so neat to put on the gear. I really liked that. I enjoyed being behind the plate. I liked it from the get-go."

Taubensee was Cincinnati's sixth round draft pick in 1986. After five seasons in the Minors, Oakland took Taubensee in the Rule 5 Draft after the 1990 season. That meant

the A's had to keep him on their 25-man roster to start the 1991 season, put him on waivers, or offer him back to the Reds.

"I wasn't too bad in Spring Training," he said. "I thought I was going to make the team. It was the last day before the season started. We went to Oakland, but I never saw the field. (Manager) Tony LaRussa called me in and said they had an injury on the pitching staff and they couldn't keep a third catcher."

If Taubensee cleared waivers, the A's could have sent him to the Minors, but that's when the Indians jumped in and claimed him.

"I was with the team while they put me on waivers," he said. "They were hoping I



**Taubensee's best season came in 1999 when he hit .311 with 21 homers and 87 RBI in 126 games, as the Reds fell one game short of making the playoffs.**

would get through since all the other teams had their rosters set. I was with the Indians for four days. Joel Skinner (a Tribe catcher at the time and now the team's third base coach) took care of me. Then I cleared waivers and they sent me to the Minors."

Taubensee went to Class AAA Colorado Springs. He was called up on May 16, when Sandy Alomar, Jr. was injured. He made his Major League debut two days later and went 0-for-13 in eight games before being sent down on June 11. He finished the Minor League season at Colorado Springs, where he batted .310 with 13 homers and 39 RBI.

Taubensee was called up again on September 5 and finally ended an 0-for-23 slump when he got his first hit – a single off Detroit's Bill Gullickson – on September 23.



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

He batted .372 the rest of the season, which included a nine-game hitting streak during which he batted .500. For the season, Taubensee hit .242 with eight RBI.

"I didn't want to get called up, he said. "We were in the playoffs at Colorado, and we were having a lot of fun."

Taubensee enjoyed playing at Colorado Springs because Charlie Manuel, the present Tribe skipper, was the manager there.

"We had a lot of fun playing for Charlie," he said. "He hasn't changed at all. He's a great guy. Usually, managers don't interact with the players, but Charlie loves to do that. He's always talking to us. You can say anything you want to Charlie. It's great playing for him."

"I've always thought Eddie was a good hitter," said Manuel. "He's got a solid bat from the left side." Even though the Indians struggled in 1991, Taubensee thought the makings of a good team were in place.

"We had a very young team," he said. "We had some older veterans like Chris James and Jesse Orosco, but we also had some young guys like Albert Belle, Carlos Baerga, Sandy Alomar, and Charles Nagy. Those guys were part of the nucleus of the team that became a dynasty."

The Indians traded Taubensee and pitcher Willie Blair to the Astros for Lofton and infielder Dave Rohde on December 10, 1991. Ironically, Blair also is back in the Indians organization.

Taubensee played in 104 games in 1992 and 94 in 1993 with Houston. He was traded to Cincinnati on April 19, 1994.

"I thought I'd stay in Houston a little longer than I did," he said. "I only played there for two years. I thought they gave up on



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

me a little early. Kenny turned into a superstar right after he got over here. Being a catcher, it takes some time to develop."

Taubensee played with the Reds from 1994 through last season. The Reds won the National League Central title in 1995 and advanced to the League Championship Series.

"I was the backup to Benito Santiago," said Taubensee. "He was the everyday catcher, but he got hurt and I got to play two straight months. They put me in on a regular basis. That was a big opportunity for me. I learned how to play every day on a winning team."

Taubensee's playing time started to increase. "I got more playing time as the years went on," he said. "When Jack McKeon became the manager there, I got to play every day instead of part-time. The point of getting me from Houston was Jack McKeon liked me from the get-go."

Taubensee's best season came in 1999 when he hit .311 with 21 homers and 87 RBI in 126 games, as the Reds fell one game short of making the playoffs. All the offensive numbers are career highs.

*continued, see Taubensee, page 100*



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Slippin' n Slidin' Around Town Year-Round



Photo: Gregory Drazdzen

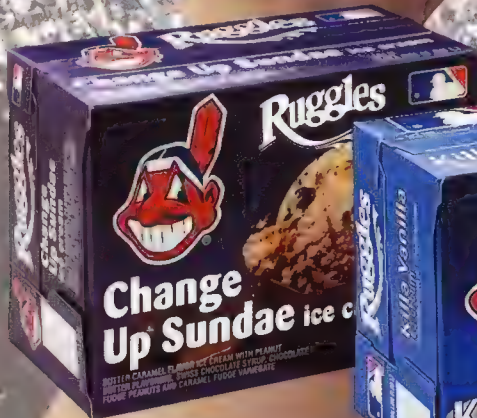
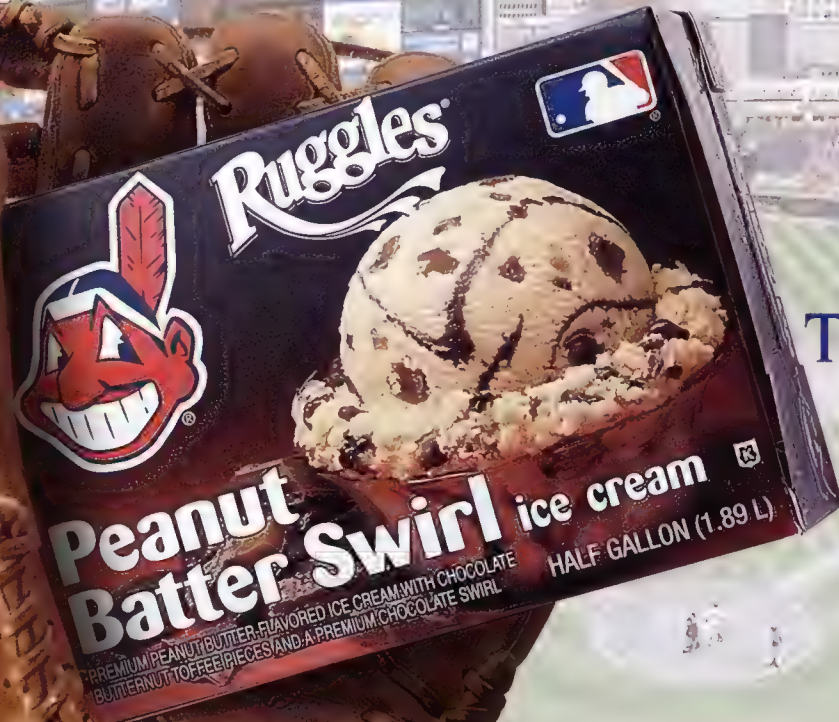




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## CLEVELAND INDIANS CHARITIES

### FUND-RAISING EFFORTS SUPPORT YOUTH PROGRAMS

continued from page 28



**Corporate Hitting Challenge** – Swing for the fences in the 6th annual corporate event. This single-elimination tournament pits Cleveland businesses against each other. The first round begins in May and winds up in September. All rounds take place at Jacobs Field, with warm-ups in the batting cages. Teams receive a souvenir video of their action and a commemorative gift. Call 216.420.4389 to register your team of nine players.



**Picnic in the Park with the Stars, A 100th Anniversary Gala Celebration** – Saturday, July 21: You've never seen Jacobs Field quite like this before. Imagine dancing to a live swing band right on the infield, cocktails from the dugout, and mingling up close with stars. The fourth annual event will feature the entire Indians roster and coaches. In addition, we've invited *The 100*

*Greatest Indians*. It's baseball's past, present, and future all in one place – and only at CIC's Picnic in the Park with the Stars. Call 216.420.4400 to order tickets.

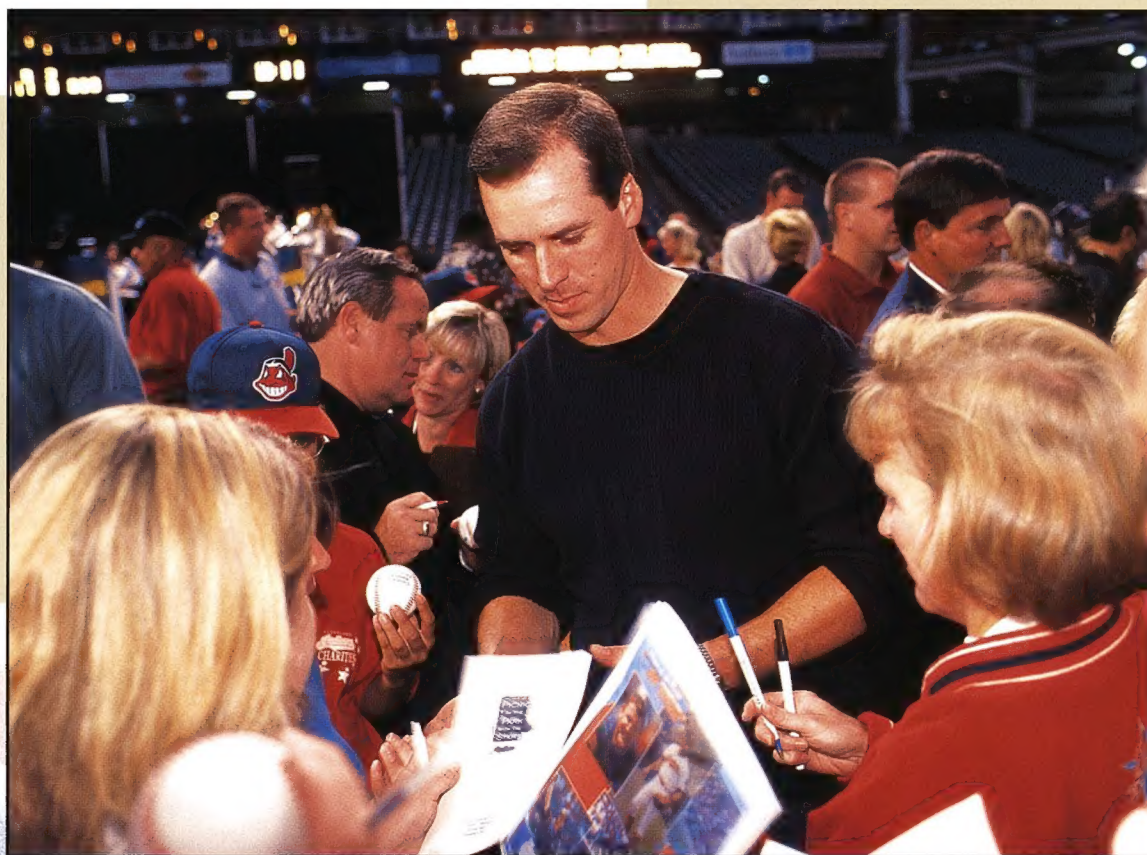
★ **Tribe Jam** – Saturday, July 7, on the Nautica Stage, see several Tribesmen as they perform with well-known, rock-n-roll stars for the celebrity rock concert event of the summer. The third annual event is sure to be fun for music and baseball fans of all ages. Call 216.420.4400 for the complete lineup of stars and ticket prices.



**Celebrity Golf Classic** – Monday, September 17, the 10th annual Golf Classic will be held at Quail Hollow Resort and Country Club. Teams will be paired with Indians players, coaches, and local celebrities. Call 216.420.4400 to register.

*Gold Glove third baseman Travis Fryman signs autographs at the 2000 Picnic.*

*The Picnic in the Park with the Stars has been a successful fund raiser since its inception three years ago. Participants enjoy mingling with the entire Indians team – at Jacobs Field. Music, dancing, and delightful refreshments round out the event.*



Gregory Drezdon



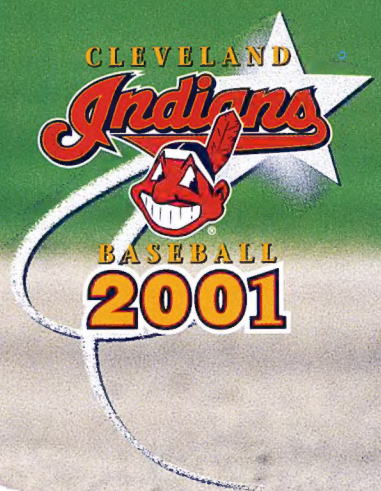


Photo: Gregory Drezdson



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## **ONLINE AUCTIONS**

*Memorabilia collectors have a new online destination — [www.indians.com](http://www.indians.com)*

*Cleveland Indians Charities  
will make four autographed items  
available per week for online auction via  
the Tribe's website, [www.indians.com](http://www.indians.com)*

Weekly auctions begin each Monday at 3PM and run until noon the following Monday. The highest bidders at the conclusion of each weekly auction will be contacted via e-mail by the Indians for payment arrangements.

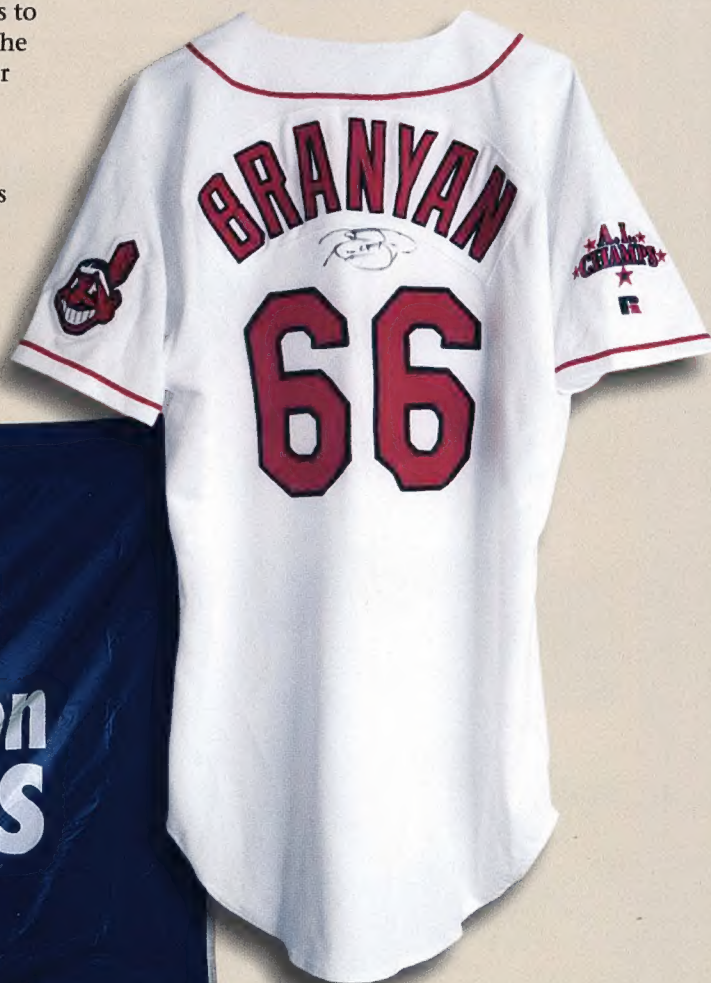
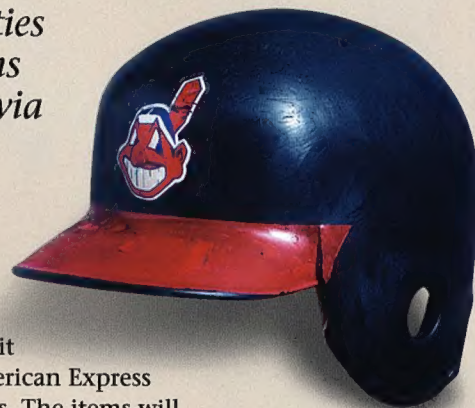
Payments can be made by MasterCard, the preferred credit card of the Cleveland Indians, or by VISA, Discover, American Express or by check made payable to Cleveland Indians Charities. The items will be mailed upon receipt of payment.

The highest bidders will have 48 hours to respond to the e-mail notification of their bid selection before the next highest bidder will be awarded the item. Minimum bids for each item will range from \$20 - \$100. All items will include a letter of authenticity.

All proceeds benefit Cleveland Indians Charities which supports youth education and recreation programs in the Greater Cleveland area.

Auction items will vary each week, but may include banners, autographed jerseys, bats, helmets, and photographs.

Photo: Gregory Drezdon





Ellis R231

